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House of Representatives

ARMS CONTROL RESOLUTION ELIMINATING THE FEAR OF A FIRST STRIKE

HON. ALBERT GORE, JR.

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 1, 1982

Mr. GORE. Mr. Speaker, I am today introducing a resolution which calls on the United States and the Soviet Union to eliminate the fear of a nuclear first strike. I am greatly honored to be joined in this by Representatives ASPIN, DOWNEY, and PRITCHARD.

There has certainly not been any shortage of resolutions about arms control during the current session, and my co-sponsors and I would, therefore, not burden the public record with yet another unless we felt that we had something to say which was urgent, and which had not yet found expression.

The next Congress will have before it many major issues concerning strategic nuclear weapons. One such decision, of truly decisive character, is whether to accept the President's plan for deploying the MX missile, and to proceed with the missile itself. The narrow votes concerning this question which we experienced in the fiscal year 1983 Authorization Bill, indicate how finely divided the Congress has been—and remains—on the MX issue.

We can also expect that the next Congress will deal with strategic nuclear problems in a political context that will have been strongly influenced by votes all across the country on nuclear freeze propositions: a vote on a scale which approximates, as some are saying, a national referendum. It seems very clear to me that when these votes are counted and analyzed, the results will be read as an unmistakable message from the electorate: "enough is enough; enormous expenditures on new nuclear weapons are unwarranted."

Under these circumstances, it will not be sufficient for the Congress to address matters such as the MX in a narrow context. Somehow, we are

going to have to come to grips with the MX, and with other nuclear weapons programs, in terms that go beyond considerations of missions, programs, and costs. There remains, at a much more fundamental level, the question of where these programs are taking us; of whether they will add to our security or, on the contrary, whether these programs have acquired a momentum of their own which will increase nuclear instability.

What we lack today, and what the next Congress will urgently need, is a standard against which to measure nuclear weapons programs; a standard that will help us reach better-informed judgments as to what kind of nuclear posture we should have, as to what kinds of nuclear weapons programs are compatible with that posture, and as to how these decisions impact the stability of the nuclear balance, and on prospects for arms control.

The resolution which Messrs. ASPIN, DOWNEY, PRITCHARD, and I are introducing is an effort to suggest what this standard ought to be. In our opinion, the United States and the Soviet Union are heading toward a situation in which each will have the ability to menace a significant portion of the other's nuclear forces; specifically, the other's land-based ICBM's, which are the most accurate and in many ways the premier weapons system.

We, in this country, already have reason to fear that our ICBM's are at least theoretically vulnerable to attack by virtue of the Soviet Union's having gradually deployed successive generations of large, land-based missiles, carrying increasingly accurate and numerous multiple independently targetable warheads. Our concern about this problem has strongly influenced debate over the U.S. nuclear program for at least 10 years, even as it has strongly affected our approach to arms control. Today, however, this country still remains unsure how to proceed—having in view neither a weapons program nor an arms control agreement that provides a solution.

Our response to this problem has

been the development of two new generations of ballistic missiles: the MX, for deployment on land, and the Trident II D-5, for deployment at sea. Each of these missile systems will mark an increase in the number and accuracy of U.S. ballistic missile warheads, such that either system, and certainly the two together, will constitute a threat—for the first time—to all Soviet ICBM silos. There are indications that the Soviets, looking ahead to the deployment of these systems, recognize that they are facing a big problem, perhaps even bigger than ours, in view of the very high proportion of Soviet warheads that are deployed on land-based systems.

The increasing vulnerability of U.S. land-based forces, and the coming vulnerability of Soviet land-based forces, are trends that are fraught with danger. Mutual fear of a first strike is highly destabilizing and makedly increases the risk of nuclear war, while putting at risk any prospect for meaningful arms control.

The Congress should recognize this fear of a first strike for what it is: the central issue in judging whether existing deployments are adequate; for deciding what new deployments make sense; and for assessing whether arms control is on the right track. We must urge the next Congress to keep this issue foremost in its deliberations about nuclear weapons programs, and we should urge the administration to base both its nuclear programming and its negotiating efforts around the same concern. We must urgently search for measures that can produce stability in the strategic relationship by insuring that a first strike would not confer upon the aggressor nation even a hypothetical advantage.

Our resolution states that. We hope that many of our colleagues will reflect upon it, and I look forward to increasing acceptance of this idea as a guide for debate, and hopefully, as an element in a bipartisan consensus about the nuclear problem in the next session.

* With R Ashin (and
members of Congress) on the
other side of the issue